



Representative Joyce Mulliken



13th District 1997 Session Report

Spring 1997

Dear friends,

It's great to be back home in the 13th District! This was a historic year for the Washington state Legislature. After 105 days of intense work and long debate, lawmakers enacted two landmark reform measures that will drastically alter the course of welfare and juvenile justice forever in our state. We adopted an operating budget that is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit and slows the amount of growth in government by its widest margin since 1971. We also managed to accomplish these feats on schedule, marking the first time in 40 years the Legislature has concluded its work on time in a budget-writing session. All in all, this was definitely a session to write home about.

Our accomplishments should not overshadow the struggles we faced along the way. There were many challenges this session. Besides the budget, we set out to address a number of other pressing state issues, including transportation, public safety, growth management, regulatory reform, and strengthening education. The specifics of the budget and other items we considered this session are outlined in this report.

Finally, I want to thank each of you who contacted my office during the legislative session. I realize the winter weather may have kept many of you from visiting Olympia in person, but your letters, phone calls, faxes and e-mails kept me up-to-date on what matters most to you. I need your ideas in order to represent you effectively on the west side. If you have questions or concerns about state government, don't hesitate to contact me here in the district or call my office in Olympia at (360) 786-7808.

Remember, I'm here to serve you as well as represent you.

In your service,

Joyce Mulliken
State Representative

Committees:

Finance, *vice chair*

Law and Justice

Government Reform and Land Use

Protecting taxpayers, reshaping government and prioritizing education

With total spending of \$19.073 billion over the next two years, the state operating budget adopted by the Legislature for the 1997-99 biennium meets our commitment to protect taxpayers by limiting the size and scope of government.

Allowing for inflation and population growth established by Initiative 601, the budget represents an increase of 7.7 percent over the current level – the smallest growth in 26 years – and continues our successful efforts to make government more accountable and responsive to the individuals and families of Washington. And by keeping spending \$112 million below the limit, we ensure the budget will be kept under control now and in the future.

Education is the first budget priority. Funding for K-12 education was enhanced \$288 million, including \$59 million in grants for technology and instructional materials – about \$458 per average size classroom.

We also increased access to higher education, boosting enrollments by nearly 6,400 and increasing student financial aid to help students from low- and middle-income families.

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Finance and tax cuts

As vice chair of the House Finance Committee, I was deeply involved in this year's budget negotiations. Tax cuts were high on our priority list this session, and the 1997-99 operating budget provides \$414 million in tax cuts, including a property tax referendum to prevent an increase in the state's property tax levy and limit the increase in all nonvoter-approved levies. This is small, immediate relief, but will offer long-term reform in our state. The referendum, which will appear

on the November ballot, would cut the state's portion of the property tax by 4.7 percent and limit state and local property tax collections to 6 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. With property taxes doubling every seven years, this referendum would slow the doubling to 15 years, which moves us in the right direction.

Business and occupation taxes will also be reduced, thanks to legislation approved this year. Last session, the Legislature reduced the 1993 B&O tax increase by one-half. This year, the Legislature rolled

back the remaining portion of the B&O tax increase, but Gov. Gary Locke vetoed when that rollback takes effect. The Legislature wanted it implemented this year. The governor's action makes it effective July 1, 1998.

I also sponsored a bill simplifying the computation of business and occupation taxes for small businesses. HB 1261 allows the Department of Revenue to prepare a ranged table for use by taxpayers taking the small-business B&O tax credit. This bill was signed by the governor.

Rep. Mulliken testified this session with Grant County Prosecutor John Knodell III on her bill, HB 1666, protecting unborn children from abuse.

Promoting efficiency in government

House Republicans focused their regulatory reform efforts on limiting the rule-making authority of agencies and dealing with rules already in place. This year's major regulatory reform bill, HB 1032, requires agencies to review existing rules within seven years of adoption or they expire. HB 1032 is now before the governor.

In 1996, the Legislature enacted HB 2222, a bill implementing performance audits. This year, the Legislature approved a follow-up measure, HB 1190, requiring agencies or local governments that have undergone performance audits to produce a preliminary report on their compliance with the final audit findings. HB 1190 has been sent to the governor.



The debate over land use

Gov. Locke made it clear early in the session he would not support any changes to the current Growth Management Act that were outside the Land Use Study Commission's (LUSC) recommendations. With that in mind, we set as our priorities the issues of affordable housing, rural county economic development, and protecting property rights and agriculture. We heard your loud cries – and those of others around the state – urging the elimination of the unelected growth hearings boards. Because this was outside the scope of the governor's intent, we concentrated on defining the duties of the hearings boards, with directives to the LUSC to study whether continued existence of growth boards is needed. In SB 6094 we were able to expand the LUSC from one agriculture member to three. This will broaden the input of the agriculture industry to include livestock, irrigated and non-irrigated farming.

The Government Reform and Land Use Committee will continue its efforts in the Legislature by holding public hearings around the state. The locations and dates will be announced at a later date, and I encourage you to participate.

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Protecting our communities from juvenile crime

This year, the Legislature succeeded in enacting a juvenile justice reform measure – the most significant changes in 20 years – that will make a real difference both in protecting the public and in reducing the number of teens who become career criminals.

Our reform plan ensures that those hardcore juvenile offenders who commit violent crimes will be safely locked away in a secure correctional facility, where they belong, by broadening the law that tries and sentences them as adults. Now, 16- and 17-year-olds who commit drive-by shootings, first-degree robbery, first-degree child rape, or any crime when armed with a firearm will be prosecuted and sentenced as adults.

It also provides greater flexibility for prosecutors and judges to deal with juvenile offenders so that every youngster who breaks the law receives an appropriate combination of punishment and/or rehabilitation. Alternative sentencing options are encouraged, including boot camps, home detention, mandatory alcohol and drug treatment, and community service.

Improving public schools

Strengthening education to do a better job of making sure our children have the basic skills and knowledge they need to be successful was a high priority this year for the Legislature.

In an effort to return to the fundamentals of basic education, we adopted legislation (HB 2042) to help schools do a better job of teaching reading in the earliest grades. We also adopted legislation giving educators the tools and authority to maintain greater discipline in the classroom, as well as free local schools from unnecessary and excessive government regulations that thwart efforts to improve education.

We sent the governor a bill to allow school boards to grant waivers from state laws and rules to allow schools which have collaboratively developed a proposal to improve student learning or better meet the needs of its students at individual schools. HB 1303 challenges the one-size-fits-all mentality and frees schools to find a better way to improve student achievement.

Finally, legislation to create an advanced college tuition payment program was approved. The program will allow parents to purchase tuition units now that would be redeemable for future tuition at any Washington college or university. For more information, contact the Higher Education Coordinating Board at (360) 753-7800.

Restoring the rights of families

Parental involvement is the key to raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted children. Unfortunately, many parents today feel they are disconnected from their child's education by overly restrictive rules which appear to prohibit their ability to direct the education their child receives while in public schools. To strengthen parental involvement opportunities and restore the rights of families, I prime- and co-sponsored several family-centered bills this session. Here's a brief look at two of the measures that cleared the House and Senate:

HB 1085 (prime sponsor) required parental notification and consent of student surveys and questionnaires on personal beliefs and behavior. Students in Washington's public schools are being asked invasive questions about personal and family beliefs without the consent or knowledge of their parents and guardians. My bill would have required the schools to present these surveys to the school boards, obtain parental consent once approved by the school boards, and then distribute the materials. Unfortunately, this bill was vetoed by Gov. Gary Locke on May 9, striking a profound blow to family rights in our state.

HB 1086 (prime sponsor) requires parental consent before a child is removed from school grounds by a school employee or designee. This would not apply in emergency medical care or disciplinary/expulsion situations. This measure awaits action by the governor.

Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

TDD Toll-free Hotline
(for the hearing impaired only):
1-800-635-9993

Local control of Hanford Reach

This session I again introduced legislation to restore local control of the Hanford Reach. I'm pleased to say that measure, House Joint Memorial 4005, cleared the Legislature and is now being debated in Congress. All 12 county commissioners from Grant, Franklin, Benton and Adams counties support the move toward local control of this area, rather than the federal government. Under the "Wahluke 2000" plan, approximately one-third of the Wahluke slope lands would be used for irrigation, one-third for wildlife and one-third for protecting the White Bluffs area.

Welfare reform requires personal responsibility

After 60 years, three generations of a welfare system that promoted dependency upon government, the 1997 Legislature adopted a historic new public assistance plan that will empower people to lift themselves out of despair, dependency and poverty and into self-sufficiency and economic independence.

This year's welfare reform plan represents a significant philosophical shift in how best to help those in need. Welfare will no longer be a one-way handout. Now, personal responsibility and accountability will be required of recipients. And, by focusing on the causes of achievement and success, like individual initiative, aspiration and hard work, opportunity will also increase.

Public assistance will be temporary – limited to 60 months in one's lifetime – and, from the time they first apply, all able adults will be required to work or perform community service in exchange for benefits. All teen recipients will be required to live at home or in another state-approved setting and be actively progressing towards a high school degree.